

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-56 (cancelled).

57. (currently amended) A method for managing a call from a caller to an information assistance service, the method comprising:

receiving signals associated with the call which contain a calling telephone number indicating a local calling area ~~associated with a communications device from which the call originates~~, an account which is associated with the calling telephone number being set up with the information assistance service, and which allows receipt of information assistance and one or more types of call to be made;

eliciting from the caller an information assistance request;

searching a database ~~not personal to the caller~~ for results responsive to the information assistance request, the results including a destination telephone number;

determining that a connection is to be made from the local calling area to a second calling area outside the local calling area, the second calling area being indicated by the destination telephone number;

determining whether the caller is authorized to have the connection made through the information assistance service based at least on data concerning an area from which the call originates, and the types of call allowed by the account, the data being not derivable from the calling telephone number; and

making the connection when it is determined that the caller is authorized to have the connection made.

Claim 58 (cancelled).

59. (previously presented) The method of claim 58 wherein the connection includes a long distance connection.

60. (previously presented) The method of claim 57 wherein the information assistance service is provided by an operator.

Claim 61 (cancelled).

62. (currently amended) A method for managing a call from a caller to an information assistance service, the method comprising:

receiving signals associated with the call which contain a calling telephone number associated with a calling station from which the call originates, an account which is associated with the calling telephone number being set up with the information assistance service, and which allows receipt of information assistance and one or more types of call to be made;

eliciting from the caller an information assistance request;

in response to the information assistance request searching a database ~~not personal to the caller~~ for a destination telephone number;

determining that a connection is to be made from a local calling area to a second calling area outside the local calling area based on a comparison of at least a portion of the calling telephone number with at least a portion of the destination telephone number;

determining whether the caller is authorized to have the connection made through the information assistance service based at least on data concerning an area from which the call originates, and the types of call allowed by the account, the data being not derivable from the calling telephone number; and

connecting the calling station to the called station when it is determined that the caller is authorized to have the connection made.

63. (previously amended) The method of claim 62 wherein the signals include an automatic numbering identification (ANI) from which the calling telephone number is derived.

64. (previously amended) The method of claim 62 wherein the portion of the calling telephone number indicates the local calling area, and the portion of the destination telephone number indicates the second calling area.

65. (previously presented) The method of claim 64 wherein the connection includes a long distance connection.

66. (previously presented) The method of claim 62 wherein the information assistance service is provided by an operator.

Claim 67 (cancelled).

68. (currently amended) A method of providing an information assistance service to a customer, comprising:

receiving signals in setting up a call from the customer through an inbound channel;

based on the received signals, identifying a calling telephone number associated with a calling station from which the customer calls, the calling telephone number indicating a local calling area, an account which is associated with the calling telephone number being set up with the information assistance service, and which allows receipt of information assistance and one or more types of call to be made;

eliciting an information assistance request from the customer;

in response to the information assistance request, searching a database ~~not personal to the customer~~ for a destination telephone number;

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determining that a connection is to be made from the local calling area to a second calling area outside the local calling area, the second calling area being indicated by the destination telephone number;

determining whether the customer is authorized to have the connection made, based at least on data concerning an area from which the call originates, and the types of call allowed by the account, the data being not derivable from the calling telephone number,

allocating an outbound channel to establish a connection to the destination telephone number when it is determined that the customer is authorized to have the connection made ;

dialing the destination telephone number over the outbound channel; and

connecting the inbound channel to the outbound channel.

69. (previously presented) The method of claim 68 wherein the received signals contain information concerning an ANI.

Claim 70 (cancelled).

Claim 71 (cancelled).

72. (previously presented) The method of claim 68 wherein the information assistance service is provided by an operator.

73. (currently amended) A system for managing a call from a caller to an information assistance service, the system comprising:

an interface for receiving signals associated with the call which contain a calling telephone number indicating a local calling area ~~associated with a communications device from which the call originates~~, an account which is associated with the calling telephone number being set up with the information assistance service, and which allows receipt of information assistance and one or more types of call to be made, an information assistance request being elicited from the caller;

a database ~~not personal to the caller~~ for looking up results responsive to the information assistance request, the results including a destination telephone number;

a processor for determining that a connection is to be made from the local calling area to a second calling area outside the local calling area, the second calling area being indicated by the destination telephone number;

a controller for determining whether the caller is authorized to have the connection made through the information assistance service based at least on data concerning an area from which the call originates, and the types of call allowed by the account, the data being not derivable from the calling telephone number; and

a switching device for making the connection when it is determined that the caller is authorized to have the connection made.

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Claim 74 (cancelled).

75. (previously presented) The system of claim 74 wherein the connection includes a long distance connection.

76. (previously presented) The system of claim 73 wherein the information assistance service is provided by an operator.

Claim 77 (cancelled).